abolition of licensing for seed dealers, facility for import of best quality seeds, encouragement for export of seeds and creation of Seed Banks and National Seed Grid.

**Finance Ministry's approval to a Railway Project**

*98. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways have decided to implement an ambitious plan for taking up a programme on the lines of the National Highway Development Project, by sending a Rs. 26,000 crore proposal to the Ministry of Finance; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Railways (MoR) have decided to strengthen the Golden Quadrilateral and its Diagonals which forms the High Density Network (HDN) and is saturated in most parts. The Golden Quadrilateral connects the four metro cities *i.e.* Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. The strengthening of this route will be done by laying of additional lines, improvement in terminals, electrification of selected sections and raising the speed of freight trains up to 100 kmph thus reducing the speed differential between Mail/Express trains and freight trains.

Some of the sub-projects of this programme were already sanctioned and work on these components is in progress. The sanctioned cost of these projects is approx. Rs.1800 crores. In addition, new sub-projects have been identified for sanction. The total cost of this programme is yet to be finalized, however it is expected to be in the range of Rs. 8000 crores.

**Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centres**

*99. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centres set-up in the country, State-wise, as on 31st March, 2002;

(b) the number of such Centres set-up in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) the aims and objectives of this scheme;

(d) whether the scheme provides counselling to farmers for taking up new ventures in horticulture and allied fields; and

(e) the total amount sanctioned and spent under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) to (e) A new Scheme 'Establishment of Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centres' has been launched in January 2002. The main objectives of the scheme are:—

— To create opportunities of self-employment for agriculture graduates.

— To provide multi-source extension services to the farmers on payment.

— To promote fast dissemination of agriculture technology.

— To provide input supply and support services on competitive basis to the farmers.

The Scheme aims at extending opportunity to all eligible agriculture graduates, by providing the capital for this purpose by way of bank credit with refinance from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and entrepreneurship skill development training to provide various services for agriculture development through economically viable ventures such as setting up of Information Kiosks, Tissue Culture Laboratories, Soil Testing Laboratories, Water Testing Laboratories, Veterinary Services, Agri Clinics, Agri Business Centres and other related activities. the scheme envisages provision of consultancy services on payment basis in identified activities relating to agriculture, including horticulture, which will help farmers to carry on agriculture operations on scientific and technical lines leading to higher production and better quality. The training regarding entrepreneurship skills has already started in 25 identified Institutes across the country which is being coordinated by National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE). 436 Agruculture Graduates have so far been trained, who would now be approaching Banks for credit for setting up their ventures. The Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business ventures would start operations after the trained eligible

agriculture Graduates are able to obtain loans from the Banks and set up their ventures.

A total of Rs. 1 crore was sanctioned during the year 2001-2002 for the scheme, which has been fully spent.

**MSP of foodgrains**

*100. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the basis of fixing MSP (Minimum Support Price) for different foodgrains;

(b) which year had been taken as the basic year, to work out the cost;

(c) what has been the percentage of ingredients of different foodgrains since then, price-wise; and

(d) whether the MSPs are going to be co-related with price index; if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) The Government decides on the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for various, agricultural commodities taking into account the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), views of State Governments and concerned Central Ministries as well as such other relevant factors, which in the opinion of the Government are important for fixation of support prices.

(b) and (c) The cost of cultivation/production estimates are being generated from 1970-71 onwards. To start with cost estimates of two crops *viz.*, wheat and bajra were generated and subsequently, from time to time, other crops were covered. At present, cost estimates of the following 30 major crops are generated:—

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|---|---|---|
| Cereals (7) | : | Paddy, Wheat Jowar, Bajra, Maize, Ragi and Barley. |
| Pulses (5) | : | Arhar, Gram, Moong, Urad and Masur. |
| Oilseeds (7) | : | Groundnut, Rapeseed and Mustard, Nigerseed, Soyabean, Sunflower, Sesamum, Safflower. |